Metaphors in *The Glass Castle*

Even though *The Glass Castle* is a memoir about Jeanette Walls’ upbringing, she is still trying to get a specific point across to the reader. Her tone may be impartial, detached, and non-judgemental, but she makes her point clear in other ways.

One of these ways is through the use of metaphors. Identify examples of the following symbols and analyze their significance to the novel as a whole.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Metaphor | Quotation or scene where it appears (including pg #) | Significance to the story as a whole – What does it represent? Why this metaphor to represent that? How does it connect to what’s happening in the story? |
| Fire | "what I did know what that I lived in a world that at any moment could erupt into fire" (34) | -represents her childhood - always in trouble and never safe - appealing (from her point of view), but dangerous |
| Joshua Tree | "It's the Joshua Tree's struggle that gives it its beauty" (38).  "From the time the Joshua Tree was a tiny sapling it had been so beaten down by the whipping wind that rather than try to grow skyward, it had grown in the direction of the wind" (35). | -connects to struggle of their family - beautiful (something to be desired), because of the struggle  -reality is that it's horrible, difficult, and dangerous  -JT symbolizes the Walls children - raised beaten down by what happens to them - start adapting to their parents' lifestyle - CHOICE |
| Mountain goat | "What's up, Mountain Goat?" (36).  "I never fell down... but surefooted as a mountain goat" (36). | - nickname her Dad gives her - no other children have nicknames  -she's able to climb mountains --> perseveres through challenges and doesn't let them take her down  - her Dad is her biggest challenge - she looks up to him and believes in him - she is going to have to overcome that some day |
| Rose Mary’s paintings | "she spent all day working on oil paintings" (38).  "she told us she had to paint it" (35).  "An hour passed before we finally tied mom's paintings on the top of the car" (17)  why waste time on making a meal that will be gone in an hour when you could make a painting that would last a lifetime | - cares about paintings more than her kids --> demonstrates her irresponsibility - represent her values |
| The Glass Castle | "He was telling us about the wondrous things he was going to do, like build the glass castle" (25) | - represents their father's false hope and goals  - their freedom and happiness (also that it's an illusion)  -fragile, just like their hopes  - represents his irrational goals --> castle, not a house |
| Metaphor | Quotation or scene where it appears (including pg #) | Significance to the story as a whole – What does it represent? Why this metaphor to represent that? How does it connect to what’s happening in the story? |
| The desert |  | - bleakness of their lives  -endless travelling  -best moments happen here - better off the in the desert than in the city |
| The Green Caboose/ The Blue Goose |  |  |
| The Prospector |  |  |
| Find one of your own: |  |  |
| Many of these metaphors represent something similar. Consider them as one message—what is she trying to say? | |  |